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April 10, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

I am writing to urge you to take swift action to assist pork producers throughout the country who are experiencing serious economic difficulty due to high input costs and low cash hog prices.

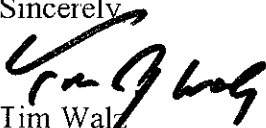
Last week, wholesale pork prices hit their lowest level in four years. This market price decrease comes at the same time that pork producers are paying record high prices for input costs. By some estimates, this combination of factors may result in a loss of as much as \$3.5 billion for the U.S. pork industry this year; that figure represents nearly 25-percent of the total value of hog production in this country.

I am privileged to represent Minnesota's First Congressional District, which ranks #2 in the United States in pork producing operations. More than 2,500 pork producers, who raise 9 million hogs each year, make their home in southern Minnesota. The industry employs approximately 22,500 Minnesotans and generates more than \$7 billion in economic activity for the state.

I have heard from many pork producers in Minnesota who are very concerned about the future of their industry if swift action is not taken. To that end, I encourage you to use Section 32 funds to purchase surplus supplies of pork for use in USDA nutrition programs.

As you well know, Section 32 funds may be used at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture to purchase surplus commodities to help encourage domestic consumption of farm products. I believe that using Section 32 funds to purchase surplus pork products is an appropriate response to the crisis that pork producers around the country are facing.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and for your work in maintaining the competitiveness of America's agricultural producers.

Sincerely,

Tim Walz
Member of Congress